

## Report of the Joint Ministerial Committee: 2015 – 2018

### Introduction

The Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) comprises the UK Government, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Executive and is at the centre of formal relations between the administrations. The JMC meets in Plenary, EU negotiations Domestic and European formats. Procedures for the operation of the Joint Ministerial Committee are set out in the Memorandum of Understanding.

This document outlines the activities of the JMC since the report covering 2013-14 and will be published on the websites of the four administrations.

### JMC Plenary

The Joint Ministerial Committee (JMC) met in plenary format on **24 October 2016** in London, **30 January 2017** in Cardiff and **14 March 2018** in London.

On **24 October 2016**, discussion took place on the state of relations between the administrations, exiting the European Union and economic growth and industrial strategy.

On the first item, Ministers discussed the principles which should govern relations between the four administrations and agreed that the next report on the key activities of the JMC will be published in Autumn 2017. It was agreed that JMC(P) should meet on a more frequent basis.

The Prime Minister restated the UK Government's commitment to full engagement with the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive on the UK's exit from the European Union. Ministers discussed how the constituent parts of the United Kingdom should work together to ensure that the interests of all parts of the United Kingdom are protected and advanced, and to develop a UK approach and objectives for the forthcoming negotiations. They agreed to take forward multilateral engagement through a new Joint Ministerial Committee on EU Negotiations to be known as JMC (EN).

Ministers also discussed the key issues of importance to them in promoting economic growth, including approaches to industrial strategy across the UK.

On **30 January 2017** discussion took place on exiting the European Union, trade and investment opportunities, and the state of relations between the administrations. On the first item, the Prime Minister provided an update on the objectives for the UK's exit from the EU. The Secretary of State for Exiting the EU provided a progress update and overview of discussions to the Plenary, on the work of the Joint Ministerial Committee EU Negotiations (JMC(EN)). Ministers noted that consideration of the proposals of the devolved administrations was an ongoing process. Work needed to be intensified ahead of triggering Article 50 and continued at the same pace thereafter. Ministers explored how the four administrations could most effectively support businesses to trade and invest and identified priority areas for continued collaboration. On the final item, Ministers talked about the principles which should govern relations between the four administrations and remitted further work to the Secretariat. Ministers agreed to meet again in Plenary format later in 2017.

## Discussion on Exiting the European Union

It was agreed at JMC(P) that the new JMC forum JMC (EN) would have the following terms of reference:

### Working together in EU Negotiations

Through the JMC(EN) the governments will work collaboratively to:

- discuss each government's requirements of the future relationship with the EU;
- seek to agree a UK approach to, and objectives for, Article 50 negotiations; and
- provide oversight of negotiations with the EU, to ensure, as far as possible, that outcomes agreed by all four governments are secured from these negotiations; and,
- discuss issues stemming from the negotiation process which may impact upon or have consequences for the UK Government, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government or the Northern Ireland Executive.

JMC(EN) has met eight times in this period.

On **9 November 2016** Ministers set out their priorities for discussion at JMC(EN), and agreed to develop further the proposed work programme to ensure its connection to and involvement with the process of negotiations. Ministers agreed to meet monthly to share evidence and to take forward joint analysis, which will inform that work programme.

On **07 December 2016** Ministers discussed their priorities relating to law enforcement, security and criminal justice, civil judicial cooperation, immigration and trade. There was a follow up discussion from the last meeting of JMC(EN) on Market Access. Ministers agreed that officials should take forward joint analysis across the range of issues being considered by JMC (EN) and captured in the work programme, Ministers agreed to continue to engage bilaterally ahead of the next meeting in January.

On **19 January 2017** Ministers continued their discussion on Market Access, and discussed the Scottish Government paper "Scotland's Place in Europe", an updated work programme for JMC (EN) and the proposed Great Repeal Bill.

On **08 February 2017** Ministers discussed the UK approach to Article 50 negotiations, the Welsh Government's Paper: *Securing Wales' Future*, and an updated work programme for JMC (EN).

On **16 October 2017** Ministers discussed forthcoming priorities and the future relationship with the EU. Ministers also discussed the establishment of common frameworks and agreed the principles that will underpin that work.

On **12 December 2017** Ministers looked forward to the December European Council and discussion on the future relationship with the European Union. Ministers discussed matters relating to migration and noted the devolved administrations engagement with the Migration Advisory Committee. Ministers also discussed progress on frameworks and priorities moving forwards.

On **22 February 2018** Ministers discussed forthcoming priorities, including the implementation period and the future relationship with the EU. Ministers discussed the role of the devolved administrations in contributing to the process of developing the UK position in the next phase of negotiations with the EU. Ministers also discussed domestic issues,

including the proposal to amend clause 11 of the EU (Withdrawal) Bill and progress on common frameworks.

On **8 March 2018** Ministers discussed the UK Government's proposed amendment to clause 11 and progress made towards reaching agreement. Ministers noted the timings for the Committee Stage debate in the House of Lords. All administrations remained committed to reaching agreement on the EU (Withdrawal) Bill. Discussions on further detail on the proposal would continue between the UK Government and Scottish and Welsh Governments in the coming weeks. Ministers noted and agreed the UK Government's intention to publish its frameworks analysis and committed itself to continuing work towards agreements on common frameworks.

## **Discussion of European issues**

It is ordinary procedure for the JMC Europe to meet before each European Council meeting of which there are four per year - June, October, December and March. JMC(E) has met ten times in this period.

On **02 March 2015** JMC (E) was chaired by Rt Hon David Lidington MP and discussed the Balance of Competences Review between the EU and the Member States, President Juncker's Investment Plan for Europe, and research funding levels within Horizon 2020.

On **15 June 2015** JMC (E) was chaired by Rt Hon David Lidington MP and discussed the Luxembourg Presidency, the digital single market, the energy union, an update on EU reform and the referendum and priorities for the June European Council.

On **12 October 2015** JMC (E) was chaired by Rt Hon David Lidington MP and discussed EU reform and the referendum, the outlook for the UK Presidency and October European Council priorities.

On **07 December 2015** JMC (E) was chaired by Rt Hon David Lidington MP and discussed EU reform and the referendum, the Commission's work programme, Netherlands Presidency priorities and December European Council priorities.

On **14 March 2016** JMC (E) was chaired by Rt Hon David Lidington MP and discussed EU Reform and the Referendum, the annual review of representation and attendance at EU Councils, energy and climate change – EU next steps post Paris Agreement and March European Council Priorities.

There was no JMC(E) prior to the June 2016 European Council as the Council meeting fell immediately after the UK EU referendum.

There was also no JMC(E) meeting ahead of the European Council in October 2016 as a date could not be identified that could accommodate all parties. Papers for the meeting were shared, with the Minister for State, David Jones offering devolved administration Ministers the opportunity to share their views via correspondence ahead of the Council meeting.

On **7 December 2016**, JMC (E) was chaired by David Jones, Minister of State for DExEU. In addition to the standard JMC(E) item on European Council business there was also an item on "Effective Joint Working on on-going Domestic EU Business" There was also a paper on the UK Government's priorities for Commission Work Programme.

JMC(E) met on **08 March 2017** ahead of the March European Council in London and was chaired by David Jones Minister of State for DExEU.

After the election there was a JMC(E) held on **21 June 2017**, ahead of the June European Council, which was chaired by the incoming Minister of State, Baroness Anelay of St John.

In addition to the standard item on Council business, Ministers discussed the Circular Economy, Energy and Offensive and Defensive Priorities.

On **11 October 2017** Ministers discussed UK Priorities for Ongoing EU Business (October 2017 – December 2018); Review of UK Strategy towards Infractions and Implementation of EU Law and Priorities for the October European Council (Migration; Digital; Defence; External relations; and Trade - EU Exit Negotiations were discussed in EU27 format).

On **06 December 2017** Ministers discussed UK priorities for the European Council, the European Pillar on Social Rights and upcoming priorities for the Bulgarian EU presidency.

### **Dispute Avoidance and resolution**

One issue was remitted for further discussions between the administrations regarding the UK Government funding set out in the financial annex to the confidence and supply agreement between the Conservative Party and the DUP.

### **Discussions on the Economy and Public Finances**

The key forum for consideration of financial and economic matters is the Finance Ministers' Quadrilateral which met three times during the period.

On **24th October 2016** Ministers discussed:

- The state of the economy
- Autumn Statement 2017

On **14th February 2017** Ministers discussed:

- The state of the economy
- Spring Budget 2017

On **26th October 2017** Ministers discussed:

- the prospects for the Autumn budget and areas of common interest in relation to the economy;
- network rail funding;
- Police and Fire VAT;
- the interactions between Administrations' budget timetables and tax policies;
- and EU Exit.

Treasury Ministers and Finance Ministers from each of the devolved administrations also maintain regular contact throughout the year covering a range of matters of mutual interest.

**JMC Joint Secretariat**

**March 2018**